

Aid Strings Keep Cuba Tied to Soviet

By DON BOHNING
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Miami — Premier Fidel Castro has placed Cuba more firmly than ever in the camp of Moscow-style communism on international issues.

It was the price of continued Russian economic support and increased technical assistance.

The stepped-up Soviet political influence over the island's affairs is reflected in key personnel changes in Havana, particularly the Interior Ministry which directs Cuba's intelligence and security operations.

Here, also, rests control of Cuba's subversive activities in the hemisphere, a source of conflict in recent years between the violence-oriented Castro formula and the Russians, who publicly espouse the more traditional paths to power.

So, too, has the increasing Soviet role in Cuba created dissensions among the various groups of the government hierarchy and a scramble for ascendancy.

These are the conclusions of Cuba-watchers based on developments over the past year.

Defector's Story

They were reinforced with recent disclosures attributed to a Cuban defector, Orlando Castro Hidalgo, appearing in the Christian Science Monitor.

Castro Hidalgo, a former employee of the Cuban intelligence service (DGI) who defected from the Cuban embassy in Paris last spring, is now in the United States under protective custody.

He has told interrogators that the Castro government signed a pact with the Soviets in 1968 agreeing to mute its criticism of Moscow-line Communist Parties in Latin America, to put its intelligence network at the service of the Russians and to adhere to the Soviet international political line.

In return, Moscow was to continue its subsidy of the Cuban economy — estimated upward of \$1 million daily — and to send 5,000 mining, agricultural, atomic energy, fishing and military technicians to Cuba.

There has been a substantial unurge in the number of technicians arriving this year.

Other events also tend to bear out Castro Hidalgo's report.

Various Indications

A clearly discernible improvement in Moscow-Havana relations has been publicly apparent since Premier Castro, in a speech a year ago, endorsed the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia as a necessary evil.

Other indicators of the improved relations have been:

—Establishment in April of a Cuba-Soviet Friendship Association in Havana.

—Relative ease with which a new Cuba-Soviet trade and long-term credit agreement was reached this year.

—A warm exchange of platitudes on Jan. 2 at observances marking the 10th anniversary of Castro's takeover in Cuba.

—The recent visit by Soviet warships to Havana.

New Interior Minister

In October, 1968, Ramiro Valdes was replaced as interior minister, a post he had held since Castro came to power in 1959.

It was Valdes, in charge of police, who had prosecuted the pro-Soviet faction headed by old guard Communist, Anibal Escalante, in January, 1968, a period when Russian-Cuban relations were at low ebb.

It was about this time, also, that the Soviets apparently began to put the squeeze on Castro to change his ways if he wanted their continued support.

In December, 1968, reliable sources report, Cuban intelligence chiefs from around the world were summoned to Havana where they were briefed on the new arrangements. They were ordered to collect information for the Soviets.

They were told to collect information for the Soviet Union and not to engage in subversive activities in Latin America without the support of the local pro-Soviet Communist parties. Eight Soviet advisers were attached to DGI headquarters in Havana to make sure the Cubans carried out their part of the deal.

Gunboat Diplomacy

Analysts now believe that the visit to Havana by seven Soviet warships last month was primarily an exercise in gunboat diplomacy, reportedly scheduled without even consulting Castro.

He first learned of it from Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, an old guard Communist cabinet minister without portfolio who has emerged as a top spokesman on international affairs.

Rodriguez headed the Cuban observer delegation to the world Communist Party Congress in Moscow in early June and returned with the first word of the planned visit.